Office for Intergroup Dialogue and Civil Community Offers Opportunities for Civil Discourse and Increased Understanding Around Difficult Issues

By: Daniel B. Griffith, Director, IUPUI Office for Intergroup Dialogue and Civil Community

The IUPUI Office for Intergroup Dialogue and Civil Community is pleased to support the IUPUI Staff and Faculty Councils through programming and collaborations that facilitate civil discourse and improved understanding between and among diverse social identity groups.

Intergroup dialogue processes involve facilitated, face-to-face meetings between individuals from two or more social identity groups (race, gender, sexual orientation, class, socio-economic status, etc.). They typically involve 14 to 16 participants who represent a rough parity (50/50 balance) between the two groups. For example, a dialogue on race would involve approximately 8 white participants and 8 people of color. These dialogues are co-facilitated by two individuals who each represent the two social identity groups in the dialogue.

An intergroup dialogue is a communicative process emphasizing issues related to social justice, social identity, and positionality (privilege and oppression) of groups. Participants engage in a number of dialogue sessions that move through carefully structured stages. Initial stages help group members develop cohesion, practice dialogue skills, and gain an increased appreciation of the differences, privileges and disadvantages experienced by various social identity groups. These stages are vital to create a safe environment for conversation before the group attempts to discuss “hot topics” around the selected social identity for the dialogue (race, gender, etc.) which are inherently controversial and may lead to conflict. In the final stage, the group seeks ways to continue their relationships and foster alliances and collective action to promote equality and combat prejudice.

The IGD/CC Office was jointly established in January, 2013, by the Division of Finance and Administration and the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Academic Officer. The initial impetus for creating the office was to support on-going efforts started in 2008 within the School of Liberal Arts to develop a campuswide IGD program. Among the long-range plans for IGD are to incorporate IGD principles, practices and pedagogy into curriculum, co-curricular learning, and faculty and staff professional development. IGD is viewed as a promising practice supporting the IUPUI Strategic Plan, specifically goals related to inclusive climate, faculty and staff development, and internationalization.

The IGD/CC office also promotes campus goals for promoting and fostering a “civil community” through efforts to promote campus civility, collegiality and civil discourse among all community members. The campus has a unique opportunity to engage in conversations focused on civil discourse through participation in the current IUPUI Common Theme: Find Your Voice and Hear My Voice: Creating Civil Conversation. The IGD/CC Office is actively engaged in supporting the Common Theme, including participation in the steering committee and assisting in developing and facilitating related programming.

Members of the IUPUI Faculty and Staff Councils are encouraged to participate in opportunities offered by the IGD/CC Office and its partners. There are a number of opportunities available in April and May which are advertised in this edition of the JagJournal. Learn more about the IGD/CC Office through its
website (www.igd.iupui.edu), as well as a recent article in Inside IUPUI. Individuals may also contact the IGD/CC Office for more information:

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